

# Leaving My Regrets And My Successes

by Carter Conlon

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*This sermon from Philippians chapter three focuses on the importance of leaving behind both regrets and successes to fully embrace Christ. Paul's example of counting all things as loss for the knowledge of Christ is highlighted, emphasizing the need to press on towards the upward call of God. The message encourages letting go of past sorrows and achievements, finding identity in Christ alone, and allowing His power to work through our lives for the benefit of others.*

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:8, Philippians 3:13, 1 Corinthians 15:9, Acts 10:15, Isaiah 43:25, Matthew 11:28, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 13:5, Ephesians 2:10

**Topics:** "Letting Go of the Past", "Embracing Identity in Christ"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I wanna talk to you this morning on the topic of leaving my regrets and my successes. Leaving my regrets and my successes from the book of Philippians chapter three. If you have a Bible or device that can give you access to that, Philippians chapter three.

Now, Father, I thank you God with all of my heart for your presence. Oh, Jesus, Jesus, thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord, thank you, Lord.

Thank you for guiding us and guarding us and encouraging us and strengthening us, especially in these perilous times in which we now live. Thank you for putting oil in our lamps and causing us to burn brightly, giving us heaven's value system and heaven's focus for our lives and for eternity. Thank you for strengthening us where we are weak and tempering us where we are strong.

Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for your patience and mercy in dealing with all of us. When we would have walked away from ourselves, you stayed and you didn't leave us because you promised I will never leave you or forsake you. Thank you for your mercy, your kindness.

Thank you for revealing to us your character through your word. God, I pray, Lord, for a touch of heaven to be able to speak to every heart today. And I ask you, Holy Spirit, to open every heart to be able to receive your words to us.

You are God, you created us. We are made for you in your image. Give us the grace, Lord, to turn in that direction and to allow you to be Christ in us, the hope of glory.

We thank you for it in Jesus' name, amen. Leaving my successes and my failures. Paul the Apostle writes these words in chapter three, beginning at verse eight.

Yet indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness, or in other words, right relationship with God, which is from God by faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death. If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead, not that I've already attained or I'm already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.

I press toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, let us as many as are mature have this mind. And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this unto you.

It's evident from the writings of Paul that he had a preeminent desire in his life. It was all encompassing to him. It was everything.

It was his life, it was his breath, it was his journey that I may be found in Christ, that I may know him. In other words, he said that I may be fully yielded to the living Christ who now he was aware was taking up residence inside his earthly body. It was only Paul who could write the words, is Christ in me the hope of glory? He wrote to elsewhere in the book of Acts, he said, it's in him, we live and move and have our being.

Paul was aware of something that we need to rediscover again today, that we are not called of God just to simply bring the knowledge of God to our generation, which is wonderful in itself. But we are called to be a visible expression of who God is to our generation by letting God show himself through us, show his power through us, his wisdom, his grace, everything he is. It's truly a miraculous life to live in Christ.

Now, if we live halfway between our old way of living and the new way, it can be a confusing thing, not only to us, but to those that we are talking about the living God to. Paul understood though, if I'm going to honor Christ, I have to be fully yielded to him to let him guide me, to let him lead me, to let him speak to me, to let him chart the course of my life. He says it this way, that I may know him, the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings be conformed unto his death.

And Paul says, I want to be able to yield up my will, my comforts and even my life so that the desires of Christ in me might be fulfilled. The desires of Christ in me, the desires of Christ for me. It's not my will that matters in this life, it's his will that needs to be done.

And that I may know the power of his resurrection, that he might be empowered when Paul was praying to walk in a way that is completely foreign to the natural man. This is what Paul said, God, I wanna know

your power. I wanna know the full measure of your resurrection life inside of my life.

And I don't wanna be turned back because it might bring me into sufferings. And I want to be willing to even die if that was where you're leading me. I don't wanna be cut short on this journey because I recognize that it's all about other people.

You died for us and you left us here to live for others. And it's to be your life that's lived inside of us, accompanied by your giftings, your power, your vision, your speech, your touch, your miracles, everything beginning to flow through my life for the sake of others. Absolutely amazing, a supernatural life.

But it does require the yielding of the old way of thinking. It requires that some things in our life need to be left behind. And Paul says in verse 11, if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead.

Now he's not talking about I'm working for my salvation. He already knew that heaven was his eternal home by faith. And he wasn't working to attain heaven, but he was moving towards his final destiny.

He was moving towards being the person that God had already destined him to be. Until the day that Paul made it to heaven, he wanted to live in the power of the eternal life inside of him that was now his. This ought to be the desire of every believer in Christ.

If we're in Christ, we're a new creation. The old things in our life do pass away and all things become new. And I'll tell you one thing, it's not boring, it's not religious, it's not repetitive.

It is an amazing life to live for God. It is an amazing, absolutely amazing life. Now Paul made a confession in here, or a statement which does encourage us because we look at these people in the Bible and we think like all of them just walked around with a mask and a cape and they could fly and leap buildings and do all of these things and raise the dead and send handkerchiefs to people and just sing a song and prisons were shaken and doors fell off and we feel so utterly mediocre sometimes when we look at the people in the word of God.

But Paul shares his own heart. He says, not that I've, in verse 12, not that I've already attained or I'm already perfected, but I'm pressing on that I may hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. And that's a phenomenal statement.

Paul is saying, I'm not everything that I should be. You are not either and neither am I. I'm not, I'm not. God has a plan for my life and I'm in measure, stumbled into most of it, I think.

But I'm not everything that I should be. But I'm moving forward to fulfill that which Christ is determined to do through me. I'm moving forward, asking God for the grace to be yielded.

Asking God for the grace to do his will. Asking God for the grace not to live according to my own desires and thoughts and the way I think things should go or the way I think things should be. But oh God, help me to follow the path you've laid out for my feet.

And as Paul said, even if it means suffering along the way, even if it should cost me dearly more than I even imagined it was going to. Therefore, Paul says, I have not apprehended in verse 13, but I'm leaving behind what needs to be left behind and I'm embracing what I now need to embrace. Therefore, brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended.

In other words, I'm not yet the man in Paul's case or the woman, whatever your case is. I'm not yet the person that I believe that God wants me to be. But what I am doing is I'm forgetting those things that are behind me.

And I'm reaching forward to those things that are ahead of me. You know, the Bible says that as we simply behold the victory of Christ, as we study and learn about his heart, as we see his willingness to give us or to show us things to come, as we begin to understand that his promises to us are all true, as we begin to say, God, I want that new mind. I want that new heart.

I want that new spirit. I want that new direction. I want to care about other people.

I want to be delivered from this high percentage of self-focus. And I want to really live for the benefit of others. I'm not attained it, but by the grace of God within me, by the power of God within me, I'm going to let go what God asked me to let go of.

And I'm going to reach forward to this incredible calling of God that is mine in Christ. The reason for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. In other words, there's a divine plan that God has chosen to fulfill through my life.

And that's the same for you today. There's a plan that God has for you. It's not your plan, it's his.

And he doesn't show you the whole thing. He shows you one step after another step, after another step. And as we begin, most of my life, I've only understood the leading of God after I looked behind and saw where he was leading.

Rarely have I understood it in advance. Paul says, I'm leaving. I'm forgetting those things that are behind me.

You know, one of the hardest things for you and I to leave behind is our regrets. It's hard. We have a tendency to carry them with us.

Those inner gnawings that if only I had done this, if only I had done that, if only I had been this, if only I had known, if only I hadn't done this, if only I had been there, if only I hadn't been so selfish. Paul himself says in 1 Corinthians 15, nine, for I am the least of the apostles and I'm not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. And in Acts 26 verses 10 and 11, sharing his story, he said, this I also did in Jerusalem and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests.

When they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme. And being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

Paul had a lot of reason to live in regret as he would visit churches and they would look at the faces of men, women, and children that formerly people liked them. He had hauled them out of their homes. I could see them, the moms and the dads pleading for mercy, the children crying, he was merciless.

He tortured some folks. Do you understand that he tortured them and caused them to blaspheme the name of God because of the pain. Some were put to death and when it was decided to kill these people, he cast his vote in favor.

Even the beloved disciple, Stephen, just a young man who was full of faith and serving tables. When he enraged the religious crowd, Paul was the man who held their coats while they killed him and they stoned him. And Paul knew and had these memories of the things that he had done.

It's so hard to leave your failures behind, isn't it? It's so hard to get out of your mind the regrets. I've just written a book that's gonna come out. It's an autobiography called, It's Time to Pray.

And in that book, I catalog the struggles in my own life, the regrets. It's a book that's hard to read. Even the men that was helping me to write it burst out in tears twice just reading the transcript.

And even he said, are you sure you want to write this? I said, I do want to write it because the truth has to be told. God uses imperfect vessels. God uses struggling vessels.

God walks with us through our trials and our difficulties. And I'm simply not willing to gloss it all over. There was a time in my life when I would go to my knees and weep almost every day.

Weep for the things I had done. Weep for the things I had not done. Weep for the deficiencies in my life, even as a young Christian.

The things that I should have known and didn't know. Places I should have been and didn't go. And I wrote it all down.

And I used to go into my office and I used to cry every day until one day the Lord spoke to me and said, Carter, if you succeed in what I've called you to do, you're not to touch the glory. You give it all to me. But he said, that's not the only thing you give to me.

I want you to give me your sorrow. I want you to give me your failures. I want you to give me your struggles.

You are not called to touch the glory and you are not called to carry the shame. Both of those things belong to me. I took it all on the cross.

And you may not forget, but you're not to carry the sorrow in your heart for it any longer. And it's true. God took the sorrow away.

I have the memory, but not the sorrow anymore. If you want to know what that's all about, you're going to have to read the book because I'm not going to tell you. Acts chapter 10, verse 15, the Lord spoke to the apostle Peter.

And these are words that you need to know today. Everyone who's here, what God has cleansed, you have no right any longer to call common or unclean. If God has cleansed you, you have no right to drag yourself through the mud.

You have no right any longer to hang your head. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus. Your sin, your wrong, your failure is cast as far away from you, the Bible says, as the East is from the West.

As a matter of fact, in the book of Isaiah, God Almighty says, your sins and iniquity, I will remember no more. God doesn't even remember it. It's gone.

It's all gone. When you get to the throne of heaven one day, if you want to speak a list of your failures, in life, the Lord's gonna look at you and say, well, I'll have to take your word for it because I don't seem to remember any of it. When my blood touched your life, it blotted out your transgressions.

That's what the scripture says. Didn't he say, the spirit of the Lord is upon me to open the prisons to those that are bound, sometimes bound by the regret of past mistakes, to heal those that have been bruised in heart, people that are wounded and you carry this sorrow in your heart. Think of today as Mother's Day today.

And Mother's Day can be a sorrowful day because in our generation, many women have had abortions. And there are some women here today that you carry a deep inner sorrow. Now that you're a believer in Christ and you realize what happened and you wonder what would that life have been like? What would it be like to have that child with me at church today, et cetera, et cetera.

But I'm telling you on God's behalf, it's time to lay that sorrow down today. It's time to lay it down. You have to put it away.

There's a time in Christ. If you're going to find the fulfillment and the fullness of what God has destined for your life, you have to walk away from your regrets. You've got to walk away.

You take that and you put it on Him, on the cross. He died to take that. He died to give you a new mind, a new heart.

He died to take your sorrow. Do you understand? Yes, you will still have the memory, but it doesn't have to drag you down anymore. You don't have to mourn every Mother's Day.

You don't have to have that thought keep coming back into your mind and say, oh God, if only I had known then what I know today. If only I hadn't been so self-focused, if only I hadn't been so casual with life. You need to learn to walk away.

Fathers, you need to learn to walk away from what you did or didn't do, what happened because of what you did or didn't do. As the people of God, we're not going to be able to go into the fullness of what God has for us if we can't leave our sorrows behind. I'm not saying that we just pretend it didn't happen.

I'm not saying we don't ever talk about it. I'm saying it loses its power to destroy us, loses its power to keep us in mourning. It loses its power to imprison us behind walls of regret.

It gives us an understanding of what really happened on the cross. He took our captivity captive and brought us into a place where we can testify about the goodness of God to others and bring them out of their own personal struggles and darkness and into the life and the light of Christ. The second thing that we have to learn to leave is our successes.

Paul, the apostle, he says, concerning the righteousness, which was in the law blameless. There were very few people that could make that claim, if any, in his generation. In other words, I didn't violate the law.

He was a driven man. He was a man driven by success. He sat at the feet of some of the best scholars of his time.

He was a leader among the Pharisees. He even had influence among government officials who would give him letters of authority to drag Christians out of their houses and torture them, kill them and put them in

jail. Paul was not passive.

He was an active leader. He had accolades. He had diplomas.

He had degrees. He had position. He had power.

But he says, I count all of it rubbish. All of it, all of my successes. In other words, I'm not gonna live there.

That's not what I talk about. Thank God for the past, but the past is the past. And that's not going to become my identity.

My identity is in Christ. I don't wanna know anything but him. I don't want any power but his.

I don't want people looking on my wall and seeking a diploma and thinking I'm something. The strength I have, the grace I have, the direction I have, the compassion I have, the power I have is all Christ in me, the hope of glory. We all have former successes, but as believers in Christ, those former successes are not our identity.

My identity is in Jesus Christ, his power, his resident power within my life, his resident power within your life. Praise be to God. That's why Paul said, I press toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Because the call of God is higher than anything offered in this world. Anything can be achieved in this world. It's higher.

And so I love the fact that I can put my failures and successes in the hands of God. And it all leads to one name, Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It's Christ in me that's the hope of glory.

Christ in me who determines my path. Christ in me who stretches his hand and heals. Christ in me who speaks with a wisdom that I know I don't naturally have.

It's all Jesus Christ. That's what Paul was saying. That I may be found in him, that I might be conformable to his life, that power that raised him from the dead, that that power might be in me and that people might see that this man, Paul, was raised from the dead.

Even while he lives, he was raised from the dead by the power of God. Raised from the dead of failure, raised from the death of human accomplishment, raised from the death of trying to somehow live in a way that's pleasing to God. And I put it all at the foot of the cross and the life I now live, I live by faith in the one who died for me and has become the source of my life and the resurrection power of God within me.

And Paul says, if it leads me to suffering, let it lead me there. But may I be conformable to the one who went to a cross for me. May I have the ability in my heart, the desire in my heart to go the full distance for the sake of others who yet still need to know him.

I don't suffer like Paul did yet. But yesterday, Pastor Teresa and I got to be together in Virginia and got to minister together and talk about the school and challenge business people in Virginia to live for a higher cause than themselves. And then we went to the airport.

We flew to Charlotte. Oh, it was Charlotte something. I don't even know where it was.

We flew to an airport on the way home anyway. And at that airport, we had to go to different gates. She went back to Harrisburg because they're going over curriculum and such like at the school this week.

And I went to another gate to fly back to New York. And it was the first time in a long time that I just got really weepy in the airport. And I had just preached that night before on, or the day before, I just preached on living for the benefit of others.

And I realized that in our small way, in our small way, we're doing that as God is leading. And there is a cost. But I feel in my heart that for the rest of my days, I want to lay down my regrets.

I want to put it in the hand of God and my successes. And just say, Lord, lead me now, lead us both. No matter what it costs or where it leads, take us there and make us willing to give up our thoughts of what our future should be for the sake of your kingdom and for the sake of other people.

And I tell you folks, there is a measure of sorrow with it, but there's no better way to live because you are continuously aware of the presence of God. He abides. He's not, he just doesn't meet me at church.

He meets me on the street. He meets me when I get up in the morning. It becomes an all day walk every day, not just in church.

And I thank God for it with all my heart. Now to know this, you have to be willing to let go of your sorrow, your failures. Those things that nag at the heart and could destroy your testimony if you don't give it to God.

I lived with such deep regret for the stupidity in my own life as a believer for so many years that only God could take it away and he did. I was too busy. I was traveling, saving the world while my own family was suffering.

Just a stupidity. But God said, give me that. Give it all to me.

And you watch what I will do with it. You watch the healing that I will bring. You watch.

And then when you are successful, it's always good to remember your stupidity. It helps you balance off when you're successful. It just reminds you that God takes a stupid man to do wonderful things.

So we don't get lifted up. And it never becomes a me and God doing anything. It's all Christ in me.

Everything is him. It's all him. The hope of glory.

So my altar call is real simple this morning. For people who need to walk away from sorrow and for others who just today you say, my whole identity is in my success outside of Christ. It's in my diplomas, my job, my degree, what I used to be.

When I meet with people, all I do is talk about myself and what I've accomplished. My identity is not fully in Christ yet. I need to learn to walk away.

And that doesn't mean you burn your diploma. It just means that's not your identity anymore. Thank God for it that you have it, but it's not your identity.

My identity is Christ and him alone. So the grace, it takes as much grace to walk away from success as it does from sorrow. But if that's in your heart today, and you can just say with me, I just want, I want that

walk that Paul talked about that I may know him, that I may know the power of his resurrection, that I may know the fellowship of his sufferings, that I may be made conformable even to death if necessary, that I might win him and be one of him for the purpose for which he laid hold of me, that I may know that purpose.

And so Father, I just thank you this morning, God, for the simplicity, but yet the powerfulness of these few thoughts, for on it hangs the future of the testimony of your life inside of ours. Would you give us the grace to lay down our sorrows? Do you give us the grace to lay down our successes and to find our identity in you and you alone, that you would become the author and the finisher of this testimony that you have established inside of each of our lives? Oh God, especially now, as we see the society around us disintegrating before our eyes, as we hear of so much sorrow everywhere, you have need of a bride that can be seen before she's heard. So help us, Lord, to be healed.

Help us to be humbled. Help us, God, to be everything that you've called us to be. Please, Lord, please, God, have mercy on this church.

Please, God, I'm asking in Jesus' name for people who need to lay down deep regret and sorrow that they would lay it down today, give it to you and be healed as I did, Lord. God, I thank you, Lord. I thank you that you will hear this prayer.

I thank you for new life. I thank you for hope. Thank you, God, that you will do what only you can do.

This is all in your hands, Lord. This is your church, it's not mine, it's yours. It belongs to you.

These are your people. This is your body. This is your testimony.

Let there be a profound healing at this altar today. Father, I thank you for it with all my heart. in Jesus' name.

Now, before we pray, I just wanna make a statement for all the men that are here today. Abortion is not just a woman problem. The person that robs the bank and the one who drives the getaway car are both guilty of the same offense.

So it's not just she did this or she did that. No, you did it too, sir. Paul stands before God, needing to put our sorrows in the hands of Christ.

But he is the God who heals us. He sends his word, and thank God for his healing. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Jesus. If Paul had not opened his heart to the healing of Christ, he would have been swallowed of sorrow as he had the memories of what he had done. But he said, I'm the chiefest of sinners.

I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle, but I received grace. I received, I received, I received the forgiveness. I received the healing, the touch of God into my life.

So Father, today, Lord, I just speak healing, healing in this sanctuary, healing at this altar, healing of the regrets of the past, the difficulties, the memories, Lord. Father, you came, Jesus, to open the prison doors. You came to heal the bruised heart.

You came to give the spiritual sight, to see a way forward, and to see the plan that you had for every life. That's, that's why you came. You came to have the treasure of heaven open to those who knew they had

no strength to go forward.

The gospel is first to be preached to the poor. Thank you, Lord, that in our poverty, you came, and you gave us the riches of your grace, your mercy, your healing, your hope for the future, the new song that we read about, the new heart and the new mind. And so I thank you today.

You're not suggesting to anybody here they should lay down their sorrow. You're telling them now to do it. Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest.

Come and learn of me. I'm meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your soul. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but through him that the world might be saved.

Thank you for the cross. Thank you for mercy. My God, thank you, Lord.

Thank you for hope for the future. Thank you, Lord, that you have made us clean. We're clean.

We're clean. In the sight of a holy God, we're forgiven. There's no record of wrong.

And Lord, whatever happens through our lives, we give you the glory in advance, for yours is the kingdom. It's the power, the glory. It all belongs to you, Lord.

None of it belongs to us, but, oh God, we pray that you would make our lives a sweet song for you, that you would extend your hand of healing through us, as broken and bruised as we were when we came to you, that you would heal multitudes through our lives, the testimony of who you have been to us and what you have done in us. Thank you, Father. Thank you, Lord.

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